

OFFICE OF NAVAL RESEARCH

FINAL REPORT

For

N00014-94-1-0322

R&T Code 3132105

An Organic Thin Film Laser Diode: A New and Novel Light Source

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September 30, 1997

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DTIC QUALITY INSPECTED 8

19971014 032

REPORT DOCUMENTATION PAGE

Form Approved
OMB No. 0704-0188

Public report burden for this collection of information is estimated to average 1 hour per response, including the time for reviewing instructions, searching existing data sources, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing the collection of information. Send comments regarding this burden estimate or any other aspect of this collection of information, including suggestions for reducing this burden, to Washington Headquarters Services, Directorate for Information Operations and Reports, 1215 Jefferson Davis Highway, Suite 1204, Arlington, VA 22202-4302, and to the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reduction Project (0704-0188), Washington, DC 20503.

1. AGENCY USE ONLY (Leave blank)	2. REPORT DATE	3. REPORT TYPE AND DATES COVERED
	30 Sept 97	Final Technical 01Dec93-31May97
4. TITLE AND SUBTITLE An Organic Thin Film Laser Diode: A New and Novel Light Source		5. FUNDING NUMBERS
6. AUTHOR(S) N. Peyghambarian, S. Mazumdar, N. Armstrong, and B. Kippelen		
7. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES) The University of Arizona Optical Sciences Center 1630 E. University Tucson, AZ 85721		8. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION REPORT NUMBER
9. SPONSORING/MONITORING AGENCY NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES) Department of the Navy Office of Naval Research 800 North Quincy Street Arlington, VA 22217-5660		10. SPONSORING/MONITORING AGENCY REPORT NUMBER
11. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES		
12a. DISTRIBUTION/AVAILABILITY STATEMENT		12b. DISTRIBUTION CODE
13. ABSTRACT (Maximum 200 words) This ONR program was focusing on the development of an entirely new diode laser, based upon electroluminescent organic thin films. During these three years, important milestones have been reached towards the demonstration of the first organic laser diode: (i) demonstration of electroluminescence from an organic channel waveguide device fabricated on glass and on Si. (ii) optical gain in excess of 10^4 cm ⁻¹ measured in a pure solid state conjugated polymer. (iii) fabrication of feedback structures with 0.2 μ m resolution. With the synthesis of new compounds and their characterization (determination of HOMO and LUMO levels), the performance of organic light emitting devices could be continuously improved. Current devices exhibit external quantum efficiencies as high as 3 % with a stable aluminum cathode. Output light levels in excess of 45,000 cd/m ² (500,000 cd/m ² in pulsed regime) are measured at this stage and are getting close to the levels required to achieve gain in electrically injected structures. Finally our research efforts have led to the recent demonstration of optically pumped integrated organic laser diodes using several configurations. Simultaneously, we have developed a complete theory of optical absorption in PPV and determined the origin of photo-induced absorption in this material and other π -conjugated polymers.		
14. SUBJECT TERMS		15. NUMBER OF PAGES 5
		16. PRICE CODE
17. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF REPORT Unclassified	18. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF THIS PAGE Unclassified	19. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF ABSTRACT Unclassified
		20. LIMITATION OF ABSTRACT UL

NSN 7540-01-280-5500

Standard Form 298 (Rev. 2-89)
Prescribed by ANSI Std. Z39-18
298-102

Final Technical Report

Our proposal to ONR # N000149410322 focused on the development of an entirely new diode laser, based upon electroluminescent organic thin films. During this three-year program important milestones have been reached towards the demonstration of the first organic laser diode:

- first demonstration of electroluminescence from an organic channel waveguide device fabricated on glass and on Si. Lateral confinement could be defined by either etching and filling a trench in photoresist or by changing the refractive index of the active polymer by photobleaching using UV light. Electroluminescence could be demonstrated in these waveguides and 3 dB/cm propagation loss was measured.
- optical gain in excess of 10^4 cm⁻¹ has been demonstrated in a pure solid state conjugated polymer. The gain dynamics was fully characterized with picosecond resolution.
- feedback structures with 0.2 μ m have been fabricated.

Our ultimate goal to demonstrate an electrically organic laser diode remains to the best of our knowledge a challenging task. However, our research efforts have initiated the recent demonstration of **optically pumped organic laser diodes**. Our advances in material development and characterization made during this program had a strong impact on the integrated laser structures that we develop currently under ONR funding. Current devices exhibit external quantum efficiencies as high as 3 % with a stable aluminum cathode. Output light levels in excess of 300,000 cd/m² are measured at this stage and are getting close to the levels required to achieve gain in electrically injected structures.

In addition, during our three-year program, we have completed the following tasks that have led to a gradual increase of the external quantum efficiency of our organic light emitting devices:

- fabrication of a state-of-the-art sample preparation unit for organic films under controlled atmosphere
- screening of a significant number of organic molecules for hole transport, light emitting, and electron transport layer
- synthesis of new compounds, including soluble blue-green metalloquinolates, and new electron transport quinoxaline derivatives
- determination of the HOMO and LUMO positions of luminescent and transport materials
- developed a complete theory of optical absorption in PPV and determined the origin of photo-induced absorption in this material and other π -conjugated polymers.

- Calculated polaron binding energies for various electron and hole transport materials. Demonstrated that the magnitude of the electron and hole polaron binding energies determines whether a given material is electron or hole carrier.

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"Characterization of the Critical Energy Levels in Organic/Organic Heterojunctions: Organic LED and Organic Photovoltaic Materials," N. R. Armstrong, invited lecture, ECME 96 (European Conference on Molecular Electronics), Leuven, Belgium (1997).

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